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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NEW DELHI 002208

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DEPT FOR P, SCA, SRAP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/30/2019

TAGS: PGOV PTER PREL PINR IN

SUBJECT: MANMOHAN SINGH'S JAMMU AND KASHMIR VISIT: NOT YET
TO COMPOSITE DIALOGUE, YES TO TALKS

REF: A. NEW DELHI 2195

B. NEW DELHI 2155

C. NEW DELHI 2135

Classified By: Political Counselor Uzra Zeya, Reasons 1.5 (B,D)

¶1. (C) Summary: Although Prime Minister Manmohan Singh did not announce any dramatic new initiatives during his October 27-28 visit to Jammu and Kashmir, there was significant underlying content that could have been missed by those looking for bold gestures. On Pakistan, his language was restrained and free of rhetoric. He outlined the difficulty of resuming the Composite Dialogue without some movement by Pakistan on India-focused terrorists. At the same time, he offered narrower talks on Kashmir-related cross-LOC trade and travel matters and on humanitarian issues concerning prisoners. Manmohan Singh went as far as he could go with Pakistan, given the domestic political environment. On Kashmir, the Prime Minister's presence, speeches and press interactions underscored that the GOI is determined to move forward on dialogue with the separatists and on confidence building measures (Refs B and C). He repeated that the GOI will talk to any group that shuns violence. He promised "unprecedented" resources for development in the state. He was still in the valley when the Indian Army began pulling out some troops. In a sign of the extreme domestic political sensitivity of any international role in Kashmir, the Prime Minister declared that India would "not act under pressure from anyone." End Summary.

To Pakistan: No Dialogue ...

¶2. (C) Those with high expectations that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh would make some dramatic gesture on Pakistan or Kashmir during his two-day visit to the valley will be disappointed. On the Composite Dialogue with Pakistan, he left things where they were but used restrained language. He extended a "hand of friendship" to Pakistan but reiterated the GOI's current public position that there will be no headway until Pakistan controls the terrorists who target India. He said that this was not a pre-condition but rather a "practical reality." The Prime Minister did not bring up the Mumbai terrorist attacks in his speech but when asked by

a reporter whether he was satisfied with Pakistan's pursuit of the terrorists responsible, he said he was not and asked Pakistan to bring them "to book." He urged Pakistan to create an atmosphere in which talks could be fruitful. Singh said that if Pakistan showed sincerity and good faith, India would respond positively. He scornfully rejected charges from Pakistan that India was supporting the Baluchistan and Taliban insurgencies.

... But Let's Talk

¶3. (C) While the Prime Minister did not offer resumption of the Composite Dialogue, he said India was ready to open talks with Pakistan on a more limited agenda -- better facilitation of trade and travel across the LOC and on some humanitarian issues such as exchanges of prisoners who have served their time. He noted that customs facilities need to be upgraded, lists of tradable commodities expanded, clearances for travel speeded up. He said India was willing to talk to Pakistan on these matters to make it easier for "traders, divided families, prisoners and travelers."

To Kashmiris: A New Chapter

¶4. (SBU) Nor did the Prime Minister unveil any bold initiative on Kashmir. But what he said and did reinforces the what we had reported earlier (Refs B and C) that the GOI is serious about moving forward on the Delhi-Srinagar

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dialogue with the separatists and on reconciliation/confidence building measures with the Kashmiri people. The fact that this was the Prime Minister's second visit during the last year to inaugurate railway connections in the valley was itself a sign of the attention he and the GOI are devoting to the valley. As he did the last time, he brought with him Sonia Gandhi, who spoke of the Nehru-Gandhi family's strong links to the valley. Sharing the stage were a host of Cabinet Ministers from Delhi, including the political heavyweight Railway Minister Mamata Banerjee, and the entire Jammu and Kashmir political leadership.

¶5. (SBU) In his speech, the Prime Minister reiterated what Home Minister Chidambaram had announced earlier this month (Ref C) -- that the GOI will talk to separatists -- by noting that the GOI "wants to carry all sections" in resolving the Kashmir issue. In a subsequent press conference he said that the GOI will talk to any group that shuns violence and he expressed hope that his "appeal will be reciprocated." The Prime Minister sounded an optimistic note, saying, "I believe a new chapter is opening in the peace process ... and we are turning the corner." He alluded to the successful elections in the state during the last year, saying that it was a vote for peace. He noted that the GOI is committed to providing "unprecedented" resources for development in the state and promised to speed up the "delivery of the benefits." At a public rally, he announced a new \$5 billion development package for the state.

To Kashmiris: Military Drawdown

¶6. (SBU) Immediately after the Prime Minister left the state to return to Delhi, reports started appearing that the Indian Army was moving some troops out. On October 30, the media reported that 1,000 Army personnel had moved out of Anantnag, quoting a Brigadier with the 15th Corps saying that the first column of troops had begun to move out at 8 am on October 29. There was other media reports on October of the Army moving 15,000 troops out of Rajouri and Poonch. These troop withdrawals come only a few days after the GOI pulled two Army battalions back from deployment in the valley: 33rd Rashtriya Rifles battalion from Handwara and 49th Rashtriya Rifles battalion from Qazigund (ref B).

To The International Community: Butt Out

¶ 17. (C) That the GOI remains deeply sensitive to external activism on Kashmir was borne out when the Prime Minister reacted sharply to a reporter's question about the Organization of Islamic Countries' appointment of a Special Envoy for Kashmir. He said, "we regret that the OIC has got into this business. We have lodged a protest with them on this account," he said. He declared that India would "not act under pressure from anyone." Earlier this month, an MEA spokesman was harsher, saying, "we condemn and reject" the OIC actions and that the OIC has "no locus standi" to comment on India's internal affairs. "Inherent in OIC's statements and actions ... is a complete inability to understand India's position," the spokesman added.

Comment: PM Went As Far As He Could

¶ 18. (C) It is politically difficult for the Prime Minister to make any bold move on resumption of the composite dialogue without having something credible in hand from Pakistan on terrorism. He is also constrained by the domestic storm that broke over the forward-leaning Joint Statement with the Pakistanis issued at Sharm El-Sheikh (Ref A). Under these circumstances, the Prime Minister went as far as he could by offering talks on narrower Kashmir-related and humanitarian issues.

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Comment: Saving PM For Big CBM

¶ 19. (C) High expectations of a dramatic announcement on Kashmir were also not warranted because on the Delhi-Srinagar dialogue, there is nothing yet to announce. Talks are underway and Chidambaram has said they would be behind closed doors until there are some results. On the CBMs, some were recently announced by Chidambaram and it appears the GOI intention is to gradually and carefully let them trickle out as circumstances and the situation of the ground unfolds. The Prime Minister may be roped in when the GOI is ready to announce the most significant of these measures, such as rescinding the Armed Forces Special Power Act or a major military drawdown.

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